

February 21, 2013

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee --

My name is David Golembeski and I am a lifelong resident of the town of New Milford. I am writing to you regarding the value of the regional agri-science programs in this great state that have greatly assisted myself and numerous others with career skills and decision making processes.

When I was in middle school I knew I wanted to pursue some type of agricultural career. I was fortunate enough to have attended the program at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury where I graduated in 2004 in the top ten percent of my class. While at Nonnewaug, I became a very active participant in the many activities offered in order to get the most out of my high school education experience. I competed in various contests, served as a chapter FFA officer, designed an FFA chapter website, won several awards at all levels, and much more.

One very important component of the agri-science programs is the Supervised Agricultural Experience or SAE portion. This is where each student is required to work a certain number of hours per year at an agriculturally related job while in high school with measureable goals. This whole part of the program played a large part in where I am today. During my sophomore year in high school a program graduate was at an agri-science college and career fair and mentioned that he was an assistant golf course superintendent at a local country club and they would be looking for summer help. I investigated this opportunity further and decided to give it a try for my SAE for that year to see if it was something that interested me. I enjoyed the experience immensely and have not looked back for over ten years. I even won a national FFA award for having one of the top turfgrass management SAE's in the country.

After graduating from Nonnewaug, I enrolled in the University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources majoring in turfgrass and soil science along with horticulture as a secondary major. While taking classes at UCONN, I found that some things were "repeat information" -- stuff I had already learned about in the high school agri-science program which put me ahead of the other students. While enrolled at UCONN, I was able to secure many scholarships over my four years (totaling over \$63,000) from various sources, including the top scholarship in the country from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. I attribute much of this success back to being in the agri-science program in high school which gave me the needed tools and skill set to produce competitive applications.

After graduation with a double major degree in 2008, I was employed as an assistant golf course superintendent through the end of 2012 when I accepted the position of head golf course superintendent at Pomperaug Golf Club in Southbury. At first glance one may not think that golf course management is agriculturally related but I can assure you that much of the job is from water management to soil fertility to pest management and beyond. According to a comprehensive study done in 2008, Connecticut's golf related economic impact with over 180 courses totaled \$1.1 billion annually.

In closing, I hope I have been able to show you how the agri-science program can lead an individual down a road of success for the future. These programs are extremely important to keep Connecticut's fast growing agriculturally related industries thriving. Increasing the funding level for the agri-science programs to a figure that is comparable to the other school choice options such as charters and magnets is very necessary to meet this challenge so more students can have this great experience as I did myself and contribute to job growth here at home in the great state of Connecticut.

Thank you for your time,

David R. Golembeski
Golf Course Superintendent
Pomperaug Golf Club
Southbury, CT